DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 319 PS 013 142

AUTHOR Rickel, Annette U.; And Others
TITLE Personal and Situational Predictors of Child Rearing: Implications for Intervention.
SPONS AGENCY Detroit Public Schools, Mich.; Webber (Eloise and Richard) Foundation, Detroit, Mich.
PUB DATE Aug 82
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (90th, Washington, DC, August 23-27, 1982). Also sponsored by grants from the McGregor Fund and the David M. Whitney Fund.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Anxiety; *Child Rearing; Demography; Depression (Psychology); Ethnicity; *Individual Characteristics; *Mothers; *Parent Attitudes; *Personality Traits; Predictor Variables; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Values
IDENTIFIERS Nurturance; Restrictiveness (Child Rearing)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between maternal childrearing practices (specifically, nurturance and restrictiveness) and a number of demographic and personality variables. A total of 232 mothers of preschool age children from different socioeconomic levels and ethnic groups participated in the study. Each subject was sent six instruments intended for self-administration. Instruments were chosen to elicit information on demographic characteristics (such as names, number, ages, and sex of children); marital status and education; ethnic background; and religious affiliation, childrearing practices, internal/external locus of control, depression experience, and social readjustment to stressful life events. It was found that state and trait anxiety and depression represent an important unitary factor in explaining restrictive styles of childrearing. Religious preferences, education, and ethnicity were also predictive of restrictiveness. Education emerged as being a positive predictor of nurturance. The results indicate the importance of considering a broad assignment of associated maternal personality and demographic factors before attempting to modify childrearing attitudes. (Author/MP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED223319

Personal and Situational Predictors of Child Rearing: Implications for Intervention

Annette U. Rickel[2], David L. Williams, and Gail A. Loigman

Wayne State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Annette U. Rickel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS013142

Running Head: Predictors of Child Rearing Practices

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between maternal childrearing practices (Nurturance and Restrictiveness) and a number of significant demographic and personality variables. It was found that state and trait anxiety and depression represent an important unitary factor in explaining restrictive styles of childrearing. In addition, religious preference, education and ethnicity were predictive of restrictiveness. Education emerged as being a positive predictor of nurturance. The results indicate the importance of considering a broad assessment of associated maternal personality and demographic factors before attempting to modify childrearing attitudes.

Predictors of Maternal Child Rearing Practices: Implications for Intervention

A major goal in elucidating various aspects of maternal child rearing styles is that of providing intervention programs specifically aimed at the accentuation of beneficial and efficacious styles, and the concommitant reduction in practices which unduly hamper a child's normal development (White, 1975). A significant difficulty in achieving this goal, despite proliferating research attention, has been the failure to focus research efforts on specific factors toward which intervention may best be directed. Primary and secondary intervention efforts have tended to be based on a priori notions as opposed to an accurate assessment of needs.

A number of investigations into parent-child relations have indicated the presence of at least two important orthogonal dimensions, i.e., Nurturance and Restrictiveness (Becker, 1964; Rickel, Dudley & Berman, 1980; Rickel & Biasatti, 1982; Schaefer, 1959). Explorations of these dimensions across a range of socioeconomic levels have further demonstrated differences in childrearing practices which appear to be related to socioeconomic factors. Research has indicated that working class parents are more likely to utilize generally more restrictive disciplinary techniques as compared to those used by middle class parents, and further that these disciplinary techniques relate to social problem solving skills in their children (Jones, Rickel & Smith, 1980; Rickel et al., 1980).

In view of the fact that socioeconomic status is a multifaceted concept, subsuming a number of important variables such as educational attainment, it is important to further explore these variables and their relation to child-rearing practices. One relatively unexplored aspect is a consideration of the differences in exposure to psychosocial stresses which may significantly influence parental behavior. While a number of investigators have recently

reported that stressful life events can induce a wide variety of dysfunctional effects, ranging from transient deficits in task performance to serious psychological disorder (Dohrenwend & Martin, 1979), few have specifically examined the way in which such stresses may disrupt the mother-child relationship. Furthermore, such stresses may impact somewhat differentially depending upon the mother's relative coping capacity.

Current research documents the presence of a significant number of psychosocial stressors in the lives of low-income families. Additionally, we know that children of low-income families, as compared with children of middle-income families, have a somewhat greater chance of suffering developmental difficulties in their social, emotional and intellectual growth (Langner, Gersten, Greene, Eisenberg, Herson & McCarthy, 1974). The impact of other personality variables on maternal behaviors, i.e., locus of control, anxiety and depression, alone or as mediators of the impact of stress, have been relatively unexplored. While Belle (1980) alludes to the detrimental influence of depression on childrearing behaviors, investigators have made little headway in determining the extent of this relationship.

Despite the logic of the position that increased life stresses and decreased coping abilities adversely impact on childrearing practices and, thereafter, on child development, the relationship between life stresses and childrearing practices remains somewhat unclear. This is primarily due to the limitation of such research to high-risk families, i.e., those suffering continuous and relatively extreme degrees of stress. Further exploration of the demographic and personality correlates of disruptive stress is indicated. The present investigation is an attempt to address this need and will examine a broad range of socioeconomic levels. This paper intends to shed

light on differing degrees of exposure to psychosocial stresses and various personality factors suggesting differing coping capabilities, and how they may be related to childrearing styles.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 232 parents (maternal) of preschool age children in the Detroit, Michigan, metropolitan area. These parents represented a broad range of socioeconomic levels. Additionally, this sample of parents represents a number of different ethnic backgrounds.

Instruments

The six instruments which were chosen for this study were included in a questionnaire packet and distributed to the parents for self-administration. Each packet was arranged in the following order:

a. Demographic information: Each subject was requested to provide the following information about herself: name, number, age and sex of children; marital status, education; income; ethnic background; and religious affiliation.

b. The Child Rearing Practices Report (CPRR) (Block, 1965): This self-report instrument was used to assess parental socialization practices across several domains. Previous studies of college students and parents revealed that two factors based on 38 of the 91 original items best described the response patterns (Rickel et al., 1980). These factors are Maternal Restrictiveness (i.e., a concern with the child's adherence to a set of adult-imposed rules and expectations) and Maternal Nurturance (i.e., an indication of warmth, involvement, and recognition of the child's desires and emotional needs). Cronbach's alpha was .82 for the Restrictiveness factor and .82 for the Nurturance factor, which cross-validated the two factor solution (Rickel et al., 1980).

c. The Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (IE) (Rotter, 1966): This 29-item instrument was used to assess the extent to which parents perceive that consequences that occur to them are due to their own behavior (internal locus of control), or are controlled by others or the environment (external locus of control). Test-retest reliability measures for time periods varying from 1 to 2 mo. range between .49 and .83 (Rotter, 1966).

d. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) (Spielberger, 1966): This inventory was employed to differentiate between the anxiety that parents felt at a particular point in time (state anxiety) as opposed to an enduring state of tension (trait anxiety). The STAI consists of two self-report scales each consisting of 20 items and measuring these constructs of anxiety. Reliability coefficients for the STAI range from .83-.92 (Spielberger, 1966; Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1972).

e. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) (Beck, 1967). This inventory was used as an index of depression in parents. The Beck consists of four to five descriptive statements for each of 21 categories of behavioral manifestations of depression. Depression is defined as: a specific alternation in mood; a negative self-concept; regressive and self-punitive wishes; vegetative changes; and changes in activity level. The respondent is asked to choose the one statement in each category that best fits them at that time. This instrument has demonstrated high test-retest reliability (r's of .65-.67) (Beck, 1967).

f. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) (Holmes & Rahe, 1967): This scale was utilized to assess the presence of stressful life events which occurred during the last 12 months in the lives of these parents; i.e., divorce, personal injury, fired at work. Subjects were instructed to circle

each of the 43 events which applied to them. A total life stresses score was computed using the weighting procedures developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967).

Results

Due to the nature of the issues addressed in this paper, an attempt was made to obtain groups of both black and white subjects at different income levels. Useable questionnaires were returned by 194 subjects including 68 low SES black mothers, 37 low SES white mothers, 32 middle SES black mothers and 57 middle SES white mothers. Low SES subjects were those whose family income fell below $15,000 annually, while middle SES subjects indicated family incomes over $15,000. Relevant demographic characteristics of these four groups are presented in Table 1.

The analyses of these data were guided by several specific questions. Initially, interest focused on determining the influence of attitude and personality correlates on maternal childrearing practices as assessed by the Block Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR). The relationships among these attitude and personality factors are indicated in Table 2 which shows the correlation matrix for these variables. Three variables emerge as being strongly related to both the Nurturance and Restrictiveness dimensions of the CRPR. These are State and Trait Anxiety indices and the Beck Depression Inventory total score. It is important to note that these measures are highly intercorrelated (average r = .66). A multiple regression analysis for the prediction of Nurturance from the set of attitude and personality variables yields a multiple R of .44. This is just slightly above that for State Anxiety alone. In a similar stepwise multiple regression analysis for the prediction of Restrictiveness, no measure provides a significant contribution beyond the Beck Depression Inventory score which yields a multiple

R of .39. These indices, then, appear to represent a unitary factor in the attempt to account for the variance of the two major CRPR factors.

There are small but significant correlations between the two CRPR factors themselves, as well as between locus of control (total score) and the Nurturance factor. Both are weak relationships which account for less than four percent of the variance. Contrary to expectation, we find no significant relationship between life stresses, as indicated by subjects' responses to the Social Readjustment Rating Scale and either of the two dimensions of maternal childrearing style.

Table 3 shows the correlations between the demographics and parenting variables. Several factors were found to be significantly related to Restrictiveness. The highest correlation (-.32) was for ethnicity (minority versus nonminority), suggesting that minority group membership is significantly associated with a restrictive childrearing style. The second highest correlation (.30) was for a dichotomous variable contrasting Catholic with Protestant religions with Catholicism being associated with greater restrictiveness. Other significant correlations were for education (-.27), income (-.25) and a married versus nonmarried dichotomy (.22). More education is associated with less restrictive parenting styles, as are higher family income and being married. The only variable significantly related to the Block Nurturance factor was education (.26). More educated mothers tend to describe their parenting styles as more nurturant than do less educated mothers.

These data can also be used to examine more closely the relative importance of ethnic group membership and SES in relation to childrearing style. This is particularly important as previous research has involved a

confounding of these two variables. The present study allows a separate examination of the relationship of ethnicity and SES to Nurturant and Restrictive styles.

Results on the factors of the CRPR are shown in Table 1. Comparison of the four groups on the CRPR Nurturance scale revealed no differences, which is consistent with earlier work. A significant ethnicity effect was observed on the CRPR Restrictiveness factor suggesting the need to examine this further. The slight differences on income did not approach significance. Further exploration of the ethnicity-restrictiveness relationship was carried out by means of stepwise multiple regression analysis with Restrictiveness designated as the criterion variable. Three variables add significantly to the equation in the attempt to predict Restrictiveness. They are Depression ($R = .31$), Religious preference ($R = .40$), and Education ($R = .43$) None of the remaining demographic or personality variables add significantly to the value of the multiple R. Ethnicity, however, continues to be of significant predictive value (beta weight never smaller than .50) over and above any combination of other variables.

Discussion

In the interest of more specifically tailoring primary and secondary intervention efforts toward an enhancement of beneficial childrearing efforts, attention was focused on the clarification of interrelationships among the complex elements that influence childrearing attitudes. Results reported herein strongly suggest the importance of considering a range of personality and demographic factors in the attempt to explain both restrictive and nurturant styles.

While this is a correlational study which does not indicate cause and

effect relationships, the results suggest important directions for the prevention minded investigator to pursue. Thus, for example, personality factors such as levels of depression and anxiety are clearly associated with the presence of certain childrearing attitudes. These relationships suggest the possibility of an indirect approach to altering patterns of childrearing.

Furthermore, the presence of a signficant relationship between a restrictive parenting style and religious preference suggests that it may be appropriate, even necessary, to view childrearing as only one part of an encompassing system of values. This suggests that attempts to alter attitudes towards childrearing may encounter resistance as a result of a failure to understand or acknowledge religious values.

The somewhat surprising finding of a lack of relationship between stressful life events and childrearing requires some explanation. It is possible that the failure to find a relationship is the result of a fundamental difference between the two indices. That is, the Holmes-Rahe scale specifically calls for recent life events while measures of childrearing may be tapping into a more stable, enduring dimension of family life. The previously discussed relationship between restrictive parenting styles and religion is consistent with the possibility that childrearing attitudes may represent more enduring traits that would be relatively unaffected by recent life events.

In part, the lack of relationship may be a result of this particular method of assessing stress. It may be reasonable to hypothesize that when the severity and duration of stressful events are taken into account, a positive relationship would emerge between such a measure and the breakdown

of more positive ways of dealing with children.

The results of this investigation shed additional light on the often confounded issue of the influence of ethnicity and income on childrearing practices. The results clearly indicate the significant presence of an effect for ethnicity above and beyond variance in restrictiveness explained by income, other demographic, and personality factors. Thus, it appears that the findings of previous research indicating differences between low income blacks and middle income whites may have been produced by ethnic, rather than income, differences.

Previous research has established a link between these dimensions of parenting styles (Restrictiveness and Nurturance) and the types of social problem solving strategies used by children (Jones et al., 1980). This research provides further insight regarding the relationship between these parenting dimensions and maternal personality, situational and demographic variables. A needed area of investigation is the determination of how these self-reported measures from parents manifest themselves in interactions between parent and child, i.e., what specific maternal behaviors effect specific child behaviors. Home as well as structured laboratory observational data would provide a means to gain greater understanding of the dynamics of these interactions. Thus, intervention strategies to enhance parenting skills can be developed which are more or less optimal in furthering the social, emotional and cognitive well being of the young child (Rickel & Dudley, in press).

References

Beck, A.T. Depression: Cause and Treatment. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967.

Becker, W.C. Consequences of different kinds of parental discipline. In M. Hoffman & L. Hoffman (Eds.), Review of Child Development Research, Vol. 1, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964.

Belle, D. Mothers and their children: A study of low-income families. In C.L. Heckerman (Ed.) The Evolving Female: Women in Psychosocial Context, New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980.

Block, J.H. The child rearing practices report (CRPR): A set of Q-sort items for the description of parental socialization attitudes and values. Institute of Human Development, University of California, Berkeley, 1965.

Dohrenwend, B.S. & Martin, J.L. Personal versus situational determination of anticipation and control of the occurrence of stressful life events. American Journal of Community Psychology, 1979, 4, 453-468.

Holmes, T.H. & Rahe, R.H. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 1967, 11, 213-218.

Jones, D.C., Rickel, A.U. & Smith, R.L. Maternal child rearing practices and social problem solving strategies among preschoolers. Developmental Psychology, 1980, 16, 241-242.

Langner, T.S., Gersten, J.C., Greene, E.L., Eisenberg, J.G., Herson, J.H. & McCarthy, E.D. Treatment of psychological disorders among urban children. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1974, 42, 170-180.

Rickel, A.U. & Biasatti, L.L. Modification of the child rearing practices report. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1982, 38, 129-134.

Rickel, A.U., Dudley, G. & Berman, S. An evaluation of parent training.

Evaluation Review, 1980, 4, 389-403.

Rickel, A.U. & Dudley, G. A parent training program in a preschool mental health project. In K. Rosenbaum (Ed.) Varieties of Short Term Therapy Groups: A Handbook for Mental Health Professionals. New York: McGraw-Hill, In press.

Rotter, J.B. Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. Psychological Monographs, 1966, 80 (1, Whole No. 609).

Schaefer, E.S. A circumplex model for maternal behavior. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1959, 59, 226-235.

Spielberger, C.D., Gorsuch, R.L., & Lushene, R.E. State-trait anxiety inventory manual. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1972.

Speilberger, C.D. (Ed.) Anxiety and Behavior. New York: Academic Press, 1966.

White, B.L. Critical influences in the origins of competence. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1975, 21, 243-266.

Footnotes

[1]The study was supported by grants from the McGregor Fund, the Eloise and Richard Webber Foundation, the David M. Whitney Fund, and by the Detroit Public Schools Region 7, for which the authors express grateful appreciation.

[2]Address all correspondence to Annette U. Rickel, Department of Psychology, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

Table 1

Demographics of Sample

	Low SES Black (N=68)	Low SES White (N=37)	Middle SES Black (N=31)	Middle SES White (N=58)
Marital Status:				
% single parent	70	50	30	0
Employment Status:				
% employed	65	52	73	48
Education:				
$\bar{X}$ Highest Grade	12.4	12.3	13.2	13.6
$\bar{X}$ Age	26.6	28.3	27.9	30.0
Religion:				
% Catholic	2	52	3	56
% Protestant	35	19	54	36
% Other	63	29	43	8
Block CRPR:				
$\bar{X}$ Nurturance	4.9	4.8	5.0	5.0
$\bar{X}$ Restrictiveness	3.5	3.0	3.4	2.8

Table 2

Correlations Among Attitude and Personality Variables

	CRPR-N	CRPR-R	STAI-State	STAI-Trait	IE	BDI	SRRS
CRPR-R	-0.18*						
STAI-State	-0.41**	0.25**					
STAI-Trait	-0.40**	0.23**	0.71**				
IE	-0.18*	0.15	0.21**	0.32**			
BDI	-0.33**	0.31**	0.57**	0.70**	0.29**		
SRRS	-0.04	0.08	0.29**	0.25**	0.10	0.22**	

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

Table 3

Correlations Among CRPR and Demographic Variables

	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Employment Status	Age	No. of Children	Highest Grade	Income	Religion	Age: Oldest	Age: Youngest
CRPR-N	0.05	-0.09	0.09	0.01	-0.07	0.26**	0.13	-0.00	-0.03	0.06
CRPR-R	-0.32**	0.22**	0.12	-0.11	0.03	-0.27**	-0.25**	0.30**	-0.02	0.06

**$p < .001$